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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 16 February 1993, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. ADOUKI (Congo)

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Environment and development

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The meeting was called to order at 12.45 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (DP/1993/1; DP/1993/L.1)

1. The agenda was adopted.

ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (DP/1993/3)

2. Mr. EDGREN (Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation), introducing the report of the Administrator on environment and development (DP/1993/3), said that it sought to identify areas where improvement was needed, specifically: streamlining of activities at headquarters; formulation of a budget strategy that would help strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to function effectively, particularly in the field; adoption of personnel and training policies in keeping with that goal; making fifth cycle country programmes more supportive of Agenda 21.

3. The report also focused on Capacity 21, which had been launched in response to the call by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development for UNDP to take a leading role in organizing United Nations efforts, mobilizing donor resources and helping developing countries build their capacity for Conference follow-up. UNDP headquarters had requested all UNDP offices to consult with Governments on their plans and needs with a view to making Capacity 21 a fully demand-driven programme. Governments had usually been found willing to put their own resources into the programme; the possibility of obtaining additional resources through Capacity 21 funds had served as an important incentive to develop catalytic activities that might not have been possible with IPF funding alone.

4. UNDP would continue to develop Capacity 21 and expected that, while project proposals would continue to be varied in context, all would emphasize the strengthening of national capacity to carry out programmes reflecting sustainable development approaches, which fell mainly into four categories: helping developing countries formulate and implement strategies; helping developing countries formulate policies and the requisite legal and institutional framework; helping to strengthen technological capacities; and helping to establish mechanisms for public participation.

5. UNDP was continuing its dialogue with Governments and, the previous week, had held its fourth inter-agency consultation under the chairmanship of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It strongly believed that the supporting role of the agencies of the United Nations system was crucial to the future success of Capacity 21, which represented an effort to endow the system with a truly collaborative framework for capacity-building in collaboration with donor agencies and recipient Governments.

(Mr. Edgren)

6. During the pilot phase of the Global Environment Facility, the three managing agencies - UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank - had been able to develop an excellent framework for collaboration. In 1992 and 1993 they had formulated a work programme of projects totalling $700 million, including $230 million for projects led by UNDP. The participation of the specialized agencies, regional development banks and non-governmental organizations had also been important. The latter had been active in the development of programmes and projects and had been important partners in the Facility's small grants programmes.

7. With a view to strengthening the central role of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) in combating drought and desertification, UNDP proposed to make UNSO the focal point for such programmes and for negotiations on the desertification convention. The Programme also intended to ensure that all other drought-stricken countries not covered by UNSO, particularly in Africa, would benefit from the Office's accumulated experience and to develop new approaches to drought preparedness. Lastly, collaboration between UNSO and other operational units in UNDP would be strengthened and its working relationship with regional and subregional organizations would be reinforced.

8. Mr. MARKER (Observer for Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Community, said that it had been decided at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that UNDP would have an important role in the implementation of decisions of Agenda 21: to support capacity-building activities in the field of environment, to act as the lead agency in organizing United Nations capacity-building efforts at the local, national and regional levels and to mobilize donor resources on behalf of Governments for capacity-building in recipient countries.

9. He welcomed the Administrator's efforts to ensure that UNDP fulfilled those responsibilities. Nevertheless, such a large initiative should have been the subject of consultations with the Governing Council before it was launched. Indeed, the Administrator had been invited, in Governing Council decision 92/16, to put forward specific proposals at the fortieth session.

10. Capacity 21 in its current form raised some questions which must be answered if UNDP was to attract the resources needed for that important initiative. UNDP claimed that its rapid establishment had been necessitated by the urgent need to begin the implementation of Agenda 21, yet, several months later, no complete programme or project proposals had been submitted to clarify its status vis-à-vis other UNDP activities or the work of other organizations, such as UNEP or the Global Environment Facility. Such proposals must be submitted no later than the fortieth session of the Governing Council.

11. It should be made quite clear that the implementation of Agenda 21 recommendations must take place in the context of a policy dialogue with recipient countries, ensuring an early implementation of Capacity 21. The

(Mr. Marker, Observer, Denmark)

guiding principle should be that capacity-building must be integrated into existing development plans and activities. Funds mobilized through Capacity 21 should be used as seed money for future programmes and projects.

12. He welcomed the non-bureaucratic management structure envisaged for Capacity 21 but considered that its governance should remain in the hands of the Council.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.